

TEACHER'S AND READER'S GUIDE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- 1) What happened on the day Mary said her life changed forever? What changed for Mary on that particular day?

At this point in your own life, have you experienced something that you feel has changed your life forever? If so, what happened?

- 2) Why is Mary conflicted about being Japanese and American? At what point did she start to feel this way?

If you have a mixed cultural/racial background, do you feel conflicted? If so, what are the mixed feelings? If you do not come from a mixed background, what do you imagine would be things people from mixed backgrounds might be conflicted about?

- 3) Why did Mary and her family decide to burn their Japanese treasures?

If you had been in Mary's situation, would you have burned your treasures? If so, what would you get rid of so the FBI wouldn't find it?

- 4) How many internment camps did Mary have to go to? Why did she move to different camps? What was the same and what was different about each camp?

- 5) When was the last time Mary danced a traditional Japanese dance? What happened and why did she decide to never dance again?

- 6) In Chapter 16 and Chapter 17, Mary writes about the huge conflict among Japanese Americans in the internment camps when filling out the questionnaire to determine their loyalty. Why did some people answer "Yes Yes" and others answered "No No"? Why did Mary decide to answer "Yes Yes"?

If you had to decide for yourself, would you be a "Yes Yes" or a "No No" person? Why?

- 7) When Mary was having a difficult time living in the internment camps, Mama-san asked Mary to imagine twenty years into the future, and look back at their experience in the internment camps. Mama-san suggested, “What kind of memories do we want to have then of how we faced these difficulties now.” What did Mama-san mean when she said that? Was it helpful to Mary?

Can you think of something in your own life that is difficult that you want to imagine looking back on twenty years from now? If so, how would you like to remember it?

- 8) Yoneichi never spoke much about his experiences fighting in World War II.

Why do you think he was reluctant to talk about it – not even telling his family he had received a Bronze Medal?

- 9) Why was Mary so emotionally torn and upset when she read about the United States dropping an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan?

If you were Mary’s friend or classmate, what would you say to her after hearing this news?

- 10) Why did it take Mary so long to open up and tell the details of her experiences in Japanese-American internment camps? What were the cultural restrictions?

Do you experience cultural restrictions in your own family? If so, what are they? Would they keep you from sharing your own life story?